**“The Critics” by Timothy Dwight (1785)**

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| |  | | --- | |  | | A Fable.    ’T IS said of every dog that’s found, |  | | Of mongrel, spaniel, cur, and hound, |  | | That each sustains a doggish mind, |  | | And hates the new, sublime, refined. |  | | ’T is hence the wretches bay the moon, | *5* | | In beauty throned at highest noon, |  | | Hence every nobler brute they bite, |  | | And hunt the stranger-dog with spite; |  | | And hence, the nose’s dictates parrying, |  | | They fly from meat to feed on carrion. | *10* | | ’T is also said, the currish soul |  | | The critic race possesses whole; |  | | As near they come, in thoughts and natures, |  | | As two legg’d can, to four legg’d creatures; |  | | Alike the things they love and blame, | *15* | | Their voice, and language, much the same. |  | |  |  | | The muse this subject made her theme, |  | | And told me in a morning dream. |  | | Such dreams you sages may decry; |  | | But muses know they never lie. | *20* | | Then hear, from me, in grave narration, |  | | Of these strange facts, the strange occasion. |  | |  |  | | In Greece Cynethe’s village lay, |  | | Well known to all, who went that way, |  | | For dogs of every kindred famed, | *25* | | And from true doggish manners named. |  | | One morn, a greyhound pass’d the street; |  | | At once the foul-mouth’d conclave met, |  | | Huddling around the stranger ran, |  | | And thus their smart review began. | *30* | | “What tramper,” with a grinning sneer |  | | Bark’d out the clumsy cur, “is here? |  | | No native of the town, I see; |  | | Some foreign whelp of base degree. |  | | I ’d show, but that the record ’s torn, | *35* | | We true Welsh curs are better born. |  | | His coat is smooth; but longer hair |  | | Would more become a dog by far. |  | | His slender ear, how straight and sloping! |  | | While ours is much improved by cropping.” | *40* | |  |  | | “Right,” cried the blood-hound, “that straight ear |  | | Seems made for nothing but to hear; |  | | ’T is long agreed, through all the town, |  | | That handsome ears, like mine, hang down; |  | | And though his body’s gaunt and round, | *45* | | ’T is no true rawboned gaunt of hound. |  | | How high his nose the creature carries! |  | | As if on bugs, and flies, his fare is; |  | | I ’ll teach this strutting stupid log, |  | | To smell ’s the business of a dog.” | *50* | |  |  | | “Baugh-waugh!” the shaggy spaniel cried, |  | | “What wretched covering on his hide! |  | | I wonder where he lives in winter; |  | | His straight, sleek legs too, out of joint are; |  | | I hope the vagrant will not dare | *55* | | His fledging with my fleece compare. |  | | He never plunged in pond or river, |  | | To search for wounded duck and diver; |  | | By kicks would soon be set a skipping, |  | | Nor take one half so well a whipping.” | *60* | |  |  | | “Rat me,” the lap-dog yelp’d, “through nature, |  | | Was ever seen so coarse a creature? |  | | I hope no lady’s sad mishap |  | | E’er led the booby to her lap; |  | | He ’d fright Primrilla into fits, | *65* | | And rob Fooleria of her wits; |  | | A mere barbarian, Indian whelp! |  | | How clownish, countryish, sounds his yelp! |  | | He never tasted bread and butter, |  | | Nor play’d the petty squirm and flutter; | *70* | | Nor e’er, like me, has learn’d to fatten, |  | | On kisses sweet, and softest patting.” |  | |  |  | | “Some parson’s dog, I vow,” whined puppy; |  | | “His rusty coat how sun-burnt! stop ye!” |  | | The beagle call’d him to the wood, | *75* | | The bull-dog bellowed, “Zounds! and blood!” |  | | The wolf-dog and the mastiff were, |  | | The muse says, an exception here; |  | | Superior both to such foul play, |  | | They wish’d the stranger well away. | *80* | |  |  | | From spleen the strictures rose to fury, |  | | “Villain,” growl’d one, “I can’t endure you.” |  | | “Let ’s seize the truant,” snarl’d another, |  | | Encored by every foul-mouth’d brother. |  | | “’T is done,” bark’d all, “we ’ll mob the creature, | *85* | | And sacrifice him to ill nature.” |  | |  |  | | The greyhound, who despised their breath, |  | | Still thought it best to shun their teeth. |  | | Easy he wing’d his rapid flight, |  | | And left the scoundrels out of sight. | *90* | |  |  | | Good Juno, by the ancients holden |  | | The genuine notre-dame of scolding, |  | | Sat pleased, because there ’d such a fuss been, |  | | And in the hound’s place wish’d her husband; |  | | For here, even pleasure bade her own, | *95* | | Her ladyship was once outdone. |  | | “Hail, dogs,” she cried, “of every kind! |  | | Retain ye still this snarling mind, |  | | Hate all that ’s good, and fair, and new, |  | | And I ’ll a goddess be to you. | *100* | |  |  | | “Nor this the only good you prove; |  | | Learn what the fruits of Juno’s love. |  | | Your souls, from forms, that creep all four on, |  | | I ’ll raise, by system Pythagorean, |  | | To animate the human frame, | *105* | | And gain my favorite tribe a name. |  | | Be ye henceforth (so I ordain) |  | | Critics, the genuine curs of men. |  | | To snarl be still your highest bliss, |  | | And all your criticism like this. | *110* | | Whate’er is great or just in nature, |  | | Of graceful form, or lovely feature; |  | | Whate’er adorns the enobled mind, |  | | Sublime, inventive, and refined; |  | | With spleen, and spite, for ever blame, | *115* | | And load with every dirty name. |  | | All things of noblest kind and use, |  | | To your own standard vile reduce, |  | | And all in wild confusion blend, |  | | Nor heed the subject, scope, or end. | *120* | | But chief, when modest young beginners, |  | | ’Gainst critic laws, by nature sinners, |  | | Peep out in verse, and dare to run, |  | | Through towns and villages your own, |  | | Hunt them, as when yon stranger dog | *125* | | Set all your growling crew agog; |  | | Till stunn’d, and scared, they hide from view, |  | | And leave the country clear for you.” |  | |  |  | | This said, the goddess kind caressing, |  | | Gave every cur a double blessing. | *130* | | Each doggish mind, though grown no bigger, |  | | Henceforth assumed the human figure: |  | | The body walk’d on two, the mind |  | | To four still chose to be confined; |  | | Still creeps on earth, still scents out foes, | *135* | | Is still led onward by the nose; |  | | Hates all the good, it used to hate, |  | | The lofty, beauteous, new, and great; |  | | The stranger hunts with spite quintessent, |  | | And snarls, from that day to the present. | *140* | |  |  | |